necessity, by pressing the paste flat on the inside of the cover and putting it over the fire; the top knob of the pottery always remains cool enough to be touched by the time the paste is baked. On festival days my mother bought dozens of little earthern dishes, no bigger than an English coffee saucer. They were called *hsi-mi-khwet*, oil-flame dishes, in which we burned lights of cotton wick and kerosene, and lined verandahs and window-sills with bright fairy lights in the night breeze.

We had stoneware in the house too. The *kyaukpyin* is a flat circular piece of stone for grinding the bark of the *thanakha* (*limonia acidissima*) tree, to use as a cosmetic. It has a canal all around to receive the ground paste. Kyaukpyins can be bought in all varieties and sizes in any bazaar, but my mother always got hers through the headman of Salé village, in Upper Burma, where they use a particularly suitable kind of rock which is durable and yet helps to make the paste smooth. We had some beauties, heavy pieces of about 14 inches across, a square around the circular canal, with carved figures on the corners and the ponderous legs. With the right quality of bark the ground thanakha fell in a smooth golden flow into the canal. Formerly, all women used this cream as the sole substitute for powder, letting it dry on the face and whiten it, but the sophisticated ones now use imported powder as giving a less artificial appearance.

Yet even the most ardent Max Factor fans cannot give up thanakha entirely for its great value lies in its astringent properties; it would have great success with European women who use mud-packs, because it acts like a mild and pleasant mud-pack. It also has cooling and refreshing properties, it is fragrant; older women apply it over the entire body after their baths, like talcum powder. My mother says it smooths the skin and, indeed, victims of smallpox who are left with deeply marked faces, have their skins smeared with thick thanakha many times a day, and after a few months there is a definite improvement. The thanakha bark is the most used, but barks of the red and white sandalwood and other trees (*nethapyu, nethani, kalamè, a-hmway*) are more fragrant and used on the body. Bad bark from the bazaar grinds gritty and dries patchily, but special consignments come from Myingyan and Pakokku, cut into six-inch lengths from branches two inches in diameter. A daily task of the girls in each household is to grind thanakha, and the commonest sight is a girl on a verandah with a kyaukpyin, a mug of

CHAPTER SEVEN

805 ROUND about the end of January each year, for our lunar dates
• 527 do not fall on the same calendar dates every year, we celebrated my father's birthday. All Burmese celebrations have a basis of "doing merit" either in feasting people and perhaps fasting oneself, distributing gifts, or inviting monks to preach and others to hear them. An atmosphere of enjoyment is possible in these good works because Burmese people do not believe in divorcing their praying from their merry-making; usually both are carried out in the same room, the pleasure after the holiness; and the donor feels a great satisfaction of spirit as he says; "*A-hmya a-hmya* : Share with all, share with all (the merit from his good deed)." The friends gathered around reply to this "*Tha-du, tha-du :* Well done, well done."

527 On my father's birthday monks were "lifted" or invited to the house
352 for a grand meal. All the Western chairs and tables were moved out of the sitting room; and one end of the room was laid with carpets of red and green rose design, specially kept for such occasions in all Burmese houses. This was for the monks to sit on and facing them the people would sit on mats. Between the monks and people were laid out all the presents for the monastery.

792 I was always sad when I saw these presents; to my childish eyes they
192 looked so uninteresting. A monk who renounces worldly goods is allowed to possess only eight articles, three pieces of cloth which form
[413] his robes, a begging bowl, a mat, a blade, a needle and a water strainer. Dagas or donators can, therefore, only give these, or other articles necessary to the way of life conforming to their precepts. Such include religious books, mats, candles and matches, brooms, spittoons. These last make very elegant presents, and are a common sight at all distributions of presents, the standard pattern being of white enamel, with a red band around the edge. Children are told of one monastry whose holiness is so high that a spittoon donated to the monks there will echo the name of the donator each time a monk spits into it. With the presents all laid out, the monks walk in in a row, and sit with eyes downcast and legs crossed. My mother and father make obeisance to them and send for us after a few words with the chief monk. We were always nervous and subdued on these occasions; in speaking to a monk a vocabulary of honorifics has to be used, even for "Yes". The hpongyi always made

792 and Grandfather called my cousin Ko Lu Pe to read it. My cousin had
871 been at a government school for some years and though he could read
177. and write English with some ease, he stuck at the word "circumcise".
87 "What!" exploded Grandfather, "five years learning English, and you can't even read a telegram. This education is quite useless." Whereupon he took the grandchildren and his two young sons out of their schools until his wrath subsided and they quietly started attendance again. It is a popular stage joke also, the B.A. who returns to his village and is asked in good faith by the hpongyi to mend a villager's watch that has gone wrong. The graduate confesses that he cannot mend it. The monk is horrified: "What, passed B.A. and cannot mend a watch?"

527 So now on my father's birthday the monks ask jokingly and kindly
792 about our school subjects. Their meal is laid out on a low round table,
574 and consists of all the good things my mother can think of, for they have only one main meal in the day. Rice and meat and vegetable dishes are followed by fruit, sweet milky coffee, sweet English cakes. The monastery boys are given their meal outside; the monks, after eating, rise and go, and the boys follow them bearing away the gifts for the monastery. At once there is a general shuffling into more relaxed positions, conversation swells out, we start to scamper around and help to wheel in more round tables. Then everybody eats, and my father feels a deep sense of well-being.

805 Our lunar calendar has twelve months in its year, beginning the new year about the middle of April with the month of *Tagu*. Each month contains the twenty-nine to thirty days of the moon's cycle, but the dates are numbered with only 15 numbers—15 waxing days starting from the crescent of the new moon: *la-hsan ta-yet, la-hsan hna-yet*, new moon first day, second day and so on, until the 15th and full moon day, *la-pyit nay*: after which come the waning days, *la-hsot*. With this system, we are 12 or 13 days short of the 365 each year, and hence every second year there occurs a double month of *Waso*, in July and August, which month also starts our Lent. Lent lasts the three months of the monsoon, until
796 *Thadingyut*, in October, when we see it out with lights, feasting and
462 much merriment. For the observance of festivals such as New Year and Thadingyut we usually visited relatives, but certain other observances came round each year to us in our own home.

Such is *htamanè-hto*, the making of a comestible known as *htamanè* in vast quantities, for distribution on the first full moon after the harvest. On the full moon night of *Tabodwè* in January-February, the villagers sit up all night in big parties of men and women singing and joking as they make all preparations for the cooking that is to take place by dawn. The basis of htamanè is a glutinous rice called *kaukhnyin*, always

face from bringing something off, money is paid in advance, rush tactics 593
are employed to prevent the man returning from abroad from marrying
the sweetheart of his college days, and in some cases even magic is resor- 584
ted to, though in secret. This black magic, especially, involves some 554
very undignified actions. A younger cousin of mine once warned his 177-
mother: "Please, Mother, never try to sell me like a bullock, or worse 58
still to arrange a marriage for my sister. I will not help you to jump [789]
thrice on eggshells or throw ten viss of fish into a well at dead of night
under instructions from a soothsayer."

Although marriages were constantly being arranged among our [585]
circle of friends in Thaton, I was not allowed to attend weddings as a 527.
young unmarried girl. What we did attend regularly with the grown-
ups were the *u-bok-nay*, the duty day gatherings every week in the
resthouses among the hills. On these days Buddhists who choose to
observe the day, obey eight or ten precepts instead of five. Amongst
these ten are the abstaining from food after mid-day, absence of ornament
and cosmetics in dress, meditation and prayer, and absence of a high
couch in sleep. In Thaton the observance of this day was made the
weekly social event with the same combination of material enjoyment
and religious piety that characterizes all Burmese functions as described
previously. Each family went to the hills early in the morning with
mats, betel boxes and a well-cooked meal. The girls wore all the [556]
jewellery they had because we had not yet taken the precepts, and this
was a good chance of showing that a family did not lack wealth. We
met in the resthouses, to one of which a monk came to intone the pre-
cepts. These we repeated in chorus after him; then the elders talked
and chewed betel, and at about 10-30 the whole party went to bathe in
the pools made by the waterfalls down the hills. We went back to find
the pooled dishes of four or five families laid out in a rich feast. We
stuffed ourselves with this. The law states that food should not be eaten
after noon, and the law was always obeyed in the letter if not in the spirit.

One maiden lady in Rangoon who kept duty days regularly ate till 785
as near noon as she possibly could. She usually finished her meal with
fruit, and if she was eating a banana when noon struck with a loud bang 527
from the cannon at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, "Haw!" she would ex-
claim, and in would go the whole length of the banana into her mouth.
After noon, tea and coffee are not allowed either but aerated waters,
which look so much like water, are sanctioned. When my husband was
a novice monk in the monastery, they were allowed medicinal pro-
ducts also after noon, and the hungry young novices often made a [278]
delicious soup of garlic (a digestive) fried in butter (medicinal compo-
nent), and water poured on to the fragrant compound.

•527 The younger children of the families also took the precepts, but it was not considered wrong if they felt too hungry or faint to keep to them. Everyone packed up and went home from the resthouse at about four in the afternoon. I found these duty evenings very long and depressing. There was no dinner, my father and mother told beads all evening, and at night their mattresses were removed and they slept only on mats.

428 342 We were now living in Grandfather's old house. Grandfather had left it to the four youngest among his children, and my mother had bought out the shares of the others because she was sentimentally attached to it and could not bear to see it pulled down. To others it had seemed an unwieldy shape taking so much good teak which could have built a compact modern house. My mother set about the task of transforming in into a comfortable domestic family house with a nicely disposed front and back, but it was a difficult task. There was no neat garden plot, no face, no bedrooms, but long stretches of gallery and verandah. We fenced off the well so that the village could continue to use it without infringing our privacy, the old big kitchen was dismantled and a compact kitchen made of one of the store-rooms near the washing platform, the old maternity room was stocked with commodes and made into a lavatory, the powder room was used as box-room. Six of us shared the big bedrooms. The altar, the water-pots and meals continued where they had always been. There was a large expanse of shining floor for visitors to sit on mats, and the head of the long verandah held a few chairs. The stable was cleaned up and given to Apana, now an old and rheumy-eyed man, and the downstairs hall, where a school had been, now held our stocks of rubber.

511 563 775 But still there was always so much space, the house seemed vast and empty, and the life so different from our district government houses with a crowd of servants, young men and dependents of all kinds. We felt the change acutely. My sisters were still children who played with each other and had plenty to eat during their short holidays, but I found the evenings silent and sad with the lifeless echoes which the dim light of the floorboards used to send up. I had been to stay at the house for short periods just before my Grandfather died, when I was about three or four years old. Here, where we washed our faces, we looked across to a house now mysteriously barred with a blank wooden face, but then inhabited by *ta-yok chi-thay-mas*, tiny-footed China-women, fabulous creatures according to my nurses, who, though they were slit-eyed and could curse you in an unknown tongue, could be sent reeling back with one touch of a finger. The ta-yok chi-thay-ma had other macabre qualities also. Her child had a big black patch of hair on its arm because it was the reincarnation of his dead sister. At the death of this

262 tha-yay-sa we used to eat, some of them not since we were children—and excitement and salivation and comfort in each other's company mount as one after another throws in a fresh contribution to the list, bringing back with sharp delight some half-forgotten taste from a childhood paradise. The names of our sweetmeats are all descriptive of something, their appearance, consistency, composition, or associations which they have, so that the mere recitation of them gives one delight. Sweets which are in balls: *Mon-pein-nè-si, mon-lon-yay-paw, mon-longyi, kalapè-so:* cake jackseeds, cake-balls floating, big cake-ball, cake-wee-gram-balls. Those that are in round wafer shapes: *mon-pyissa-lè, mon-hsi-kyaw, bein-mon, mon-lè-bway:* worthless cake, fried-in-oil cake, wheel cake, whirlwind cake, which can be crushed into a mouthful from a circumference of about fifteen inches. Those that come as noodly bits of flour or grain, lathered or drowned in coconut juices: *mon-laing-daung, mon-lok-saung, mon-hsan:* cake in stick pieces, cake made by covering, cake sprinkled. Those rich cakes of flour, nuts and raisins which are cut in diamond shapes from slabs twenty inches in diameter: *hsa-nwin ma-kin, kyauk-chaw, pa-thein halawa, mon-kywè-thè* or *mon-ka-lame:* cake-not-free-from-turmeric, cake-smooth-as-marble, Bassein cake, cake-buffaloes'-liver or cake-black-Indian, so black and glossy is it. Or those that come in shapes of things: *mon-leit-pya, mon-let-kauk, bi-mon, daung-kwa-mon:* cake-butterfly, cake-bangle, comb cake, peacock's hoof cake. These sweets range through all consistencies from compressed cake form to almost liquid jelly; their ingredients are from sources as widely apart as the fruit of the palmyra palm and the groundnut. Most of them are freshly made, and women and men sellers walk around with them during the hours between breakfast and dinner, from about 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

262 •627 Sometimes a child sees a miracle when all these delights are gathered before its eyes and ready only for the asking. This is at a *Neibban Zay*, a Nirvana Bazaar, a paradise on earth to the child. Kyi-Kyi once took me and my small sister to a Neibban Zay when the rest of the family were away. In the absence of my mother's more sophisticated tastes, Kyi-Kyi smeared thanakha all over Pusu's body, dressed her only in a petticoat and wooden slippers so that she should keep as cool as possible and led her by the hand to Nirvana. Three streets of householders were giving a free feast to the town; each house had a stall before it and was serving a different mon from the next. Children wandered up and down, stopping before the sweet they liked best, stuffing themselves to their heart's content, because the Neibban Zay was being given as a work of merit and grown-ups would not interfere with the distribution of charity. Never shall I forget my Pusu walking up that street, her neck

craned and her eyes round with wonder and appetite, her thanakha legs sticking out brown and chalky from under her white petticoat.

Hand in hand with the keen delight in the tastes of food goes our interest in the physiological effects of foods. Thus medicine and food are closely allied, and the good health of a normally constituted person is maintained with very little reliance on bottled tonics, even among modern townspeople. For this reason, too, Burmese people often eat foods which are not altogether good for them but the taste of which they like, and they rely on the counteracting effect of the antidote food which is usually contained in the recipe. "Neutralization is more epicurean than prevention." Just as the cooling mangosteen is eaten after the heating durian, the pickled tea-leaf which contracts the menstrual flow of women is eaten with ginger, which, shredded and pickled in lemon juice and salt, can be eaten in large amounts to have a counteracting effect. Cucumber also causes *lay-hto-tè*, the wind-to-pierce in the body, but citron is *lay-naing-tè*, conquers wind. Citron leaves and cucumber are often seen on the some to-sa-ya plate. Mushrooms which have a toxic effect are cooked with the water-greens called *ga-zun-ywet*, which not only counteract the poison but also provide a neutralizing

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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The name given thus appears to be entirely a matter of choice; but this is not so.[1] The consonants of the language are divided into groups which are assigned to the days of the week, Sunday having all the vowels to itself. With all respectable families it is an invariable rule that the child's name must begin with one of the letters belonging to the day on which it was born, but within these limits any name may be chosen. As an immediate consequence it follows that a Burman has a birthday every week, a frequency of recurrence which renders the event monotonous, and precludes the friendly amenities of western nations on such occasions.

● [527]

The letters of the alphabet are apportioned to the days of the week in the following rough rhyme, which every Burman child can repeat with as much certainty as the English one will display in the recitation of Little Jack Horner:—

Ka, kha, ga, gha, nga, Taninla.
Sa, hsa, za, zha, nya, Ainga.
Ta, hta, da, dha, na, Sane.
Pa, hpa, ba, bha, ma, Kya-thahade.
La, wa, Boddahu.
Ya, ya (the Pali and Arakanese ra), Yahu.
Tha, ha, Thauk-kya.
A, Taninganwe.

That is to say, children born on Monday have for the initial letter of their names, K, Kh, G, Gh, or Ng; for example—Maung, Ngwe Khaing, Mr. Silver Sprig; Maung Gauk, Mr. Crooked; Ma Kwe Yo, Miss or Mrs. Dog's Bone; Ma Khin, Miss or Mrs. Lovable. It will be noticed that in Miss Dog's Bone's names the initial letters of the two words do not agree as to the day. This often occurs, and the first name (Maung and Ma being merely honorary additions) always denotes the birthday. The better class families avoid such a mixing, however, as far as possible.

Tuesday's children have the choice of S or S aspirated (practically the same), Z, Zh, and Ny. For example:—Maung San Nyun, Mr. Beyond Comparison; Maung Po Sin, Mr. Grandfather Elephant; Ma So, Miss or Mrs. Naughty.

[1] [Cf. category 553, p. 3 -- ANALYST]

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

Not only has every day its special character and its fixed
805 letters, but there is also a particular animal assigned to
825 symbolise it, and red or yellow wax candles are made in
782 the forms of these animals to be offered at the Pagoda by the
[527] pious. Each worshipper offers the creature-candle representing his birthday, or that of any particular friend or relation whom he wishes well. In this way Monday is represented by a tiger; Tuesday, by a lion; Wednesday, by an elephant with tusks; Yahu, by an elephant without tusks; Thursday, by a rat; Friday, by a guinea-pig; Saturday, by a nagā or dragon; Sunday, by a kalôn, the fabulous half-beast, half-bird, which guards one of the terraces of Mount Myinmo (Meru), the centre of the universe.

782 Little candles of this kind are to be had at any of the
443 stalls which cluster about the steps and the base of every pagoda in the country, and they are as freely offered as flowers, and fruits, and gold-leaf.

551 It will be seen that there is no such thing as a surname
553 among the Burmese. A man may have a dozen sons not one of whom has the same name as his father. Maung, literally "brother," has come to stand practically for "Mister." Po and Shwe and Ba may be applied to any one without regard to his birthday, Shwe implying usually politeness or affection. Nga, used in the English law-courts and by pompous native officials generally, implies superiority claimed by the speaker or writer. Ko denotes friendship, or superior age and dignity in the person addressed. Maung Shwe Than might call himself indifferently—Maung Than, Po Than, Ba Than, Ko Than, Nga Than, or Shwe Than, and might add Maung to any one of these. As a matter of fact most Burmans chop about their name a good deal during their lives. He may begin by being called Lugale Ngè, "Little Wee Man." When he grows up a little the family probably get to call him Lugale Gyi, "Big Little Man." Later, when he begins to think of his appearance and look after the girls—and they begin that sort of thing very early in Burma—he probably calls himself Maung Lugale or Shwe Lugale, "Mr. Littleman," or "Mr. Boy," or "Golden Boy." There are a variety of other changes possible and likely. Finally, when he reaches the age of thirty-five or forty he either readopts the original Ngè and calls himself

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

copper and tin are melted together in small open-air furnaces round about, and the crucibles are carried in little wicker baskets. Large bells usually are made in a pit dug in the ground. The metal images of the Buddha for the pagodas are cast in a similar way. When the mass has cooled, the outside is polished, and any flaws there may be are patched up. Then the inscription is chiselled on, and the bell is solemnly dedicated.

The casting is made quite as much a ceremony as it used to be in the Middle Ages in Europe. The whole district gathers to see the operation. Songs are sung, and bands clash and play while the actual casting is going on, and sometimes the vast multitude is wrought up to such a state of enthusiasm that women and children throw in their necklaces, and gold and silver rings and bangles. Traces of these are to be seen in the inside of many bells, in the shape of whitish or yellowish streaks. The workmen sometimes, in the case of large bells, try to strengthen them by twisting iron chains round the inner mould in the midst of the bees'-wax. Such a chain cable is distinctly to be seen in the great ninety-ton Mengôn bell. Since the "Great Monarch" of Moscow became a chapel, this is actually the biggest bell in the world.

The shape of Burmese bells is not handsome. They come straight down to the mouth like a barrel—not expanding at the rim, like those of European make, but their tone is very sweet. In Burma bells are entirely reserved for pagodas. A Burman never has a bell in his house; and it would, in fact, be no use to him there if he had it. Englishmen do not use them either, so that throughout the whole country the bell is only used for sacred purposes.

The following is a translation of the inscription on the bell numbered 15219 in the Indian section of the South Kensington Museum:—

"The Victor, the All-gracious" [referring to Gautama, the Lord Buddha].

"The gist of the discourse on worship, as it appears in the beginning of the Dhamma-set, is as follows:—One must give goods in alms; one must preach the Law: these two things are good deeds both for this world and for the next;

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER XIX

A PAGODA FEAST

A PAGODA feast in Burma is one of the most frequent, as well as one of the most picturesque sights in the country. Each shrine has its own special sacred day; and the annual celebration of it is made the occasion of a general picnic, the congregation of people, from all parts of the surrounding districts, being bent no less on pleasure than on pious observances. Reverence for the shrines of various saints in different parts of Europe gave rise to the great fairs which were general until the end of last century, and survive even now in out-of-the-way places. Doubtless, if the Burmese were a commercial people, and cared for the putting together of pieces of silver, these gatherings might degenerate into occasions of barter and bickerings of trade—just as, if they were a practical people, their zat-pwè might blossom into something of a more real character, as the old mystery and morality plays gave birth to the modern drama of Europe. But the Burmese do not care for any of these things; and the pagoda festivals retain therefore the character they have always had, of ostensible religious assemblies. Still their most obvious characteristic to the ordinary public mind is very different. Youths and girls look forward to them as seasons of mirth and flirtation: long nights at the open-air theatre, feastings and perpetual amusements, the pleasanter because lasting no more than a couple of days. Elderly people have no less liking for them. They meet their old friends, and receive and recount the gossip of half a dozen districts; and there is always a succession of new acquaintances. It is a joyous holiday; and it is sanctified by the

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

527 thought that the few hours spent at the payā gather up stores of kutho, not less certainly profitable than the social delights of the "duty day" are pleasurable.

796 101 The greatest of all the pagoda feasts is, of course, that of the Shwe Dagôn in Rangoon, with its pilgrims, not only from the farthest parts of Burma and far-away Shan hills, but also from over the seas, from Siam and Cambodia and the Corea. But the vastness of the gathering and the proximity of the great town spoil the national character of the festival, and introduce too many elements of nineteenth-century civilisation in the shape of merry-go-rounds and hack carriages. A "jungle" feast is not only more characteristic, but more appreciated in its way by both town and country folk.

796 There are three old Talaing pagodas near Rangoon, Kyaik-ka-san, Kyaik-ka-lo, and Kyaik-waing, whose annual duty days are looked forward to with pleasure by all the people round about. The feasts all occur in the month of Tabodwè, corresponding to our February or March. I have a suspicion that, were the proper date adhered to, all three would have the same uboné; but such a lavish squandering of the good a popular religion provides for us would hardly meet with lay approval, even if advocated by the most holy of hermits. Accordingly the three pagoda days occur at intervals of a week, without reference to the crescent or waning moon; and latterly, with singular convenience for Burmans occupied in business in Rangoon, [177-79] have usually been fixed for Sunday; so that English merchants are not troubled with the sudden ailments of their clerks at this season so much as used formerly to be the case. The Kyaik-ka-san is probably the most sacred of the three; containing as it does a tooth and bone of the forehead of Shin Gautama, brought to Rangoon by a yahanda, a blameless mendicant, over whose remains in Rangoon a huge thein-gyi, or ceremonial building, has been erected. Kyaik-ka-lo is, however, seemingly the more popular. It stands on the summit of a little hill about fourteen miles north of Rangoon, and is built of laterite blocks, now faced with bricks covered with plaster. The shrine was built in the second century before Christ, and,

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER XXI

THE END OF LENT

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THE end of the Wā, or the full moon of Thadin-gyut, is always the occasion of a regular carnival of enjoyment, which in Rangoon has latterly shown a tendency to degenerate into uproarious saturnalia. The dismal season of the rains and of Lent, when there were no pwès anywhere, no feasts, no courting to be done wherever the parents were at all strict, no amusement of any kind to be had, except the somewhat tame diversion of a gossip with kindred spirits at the pagoda on the duty days—all this has passed away. Plays, ahlu pwè and kyi-gyin pwè, are to be seen in every quarter; young brothers who have just finished their three months as novitiants in the monastery and have come out into the world again are wild with excitement at their regained freedom, and infect their sisters with enthusiasm for gaiety of all sorts; the town is illuminated, feasting goes on everywhere, and the street plays are so crowded that you cannot secure a decent place unless you come down early in the afternoon, or at any rate before nightfall.

But all public festivals in Burma are religious in their character, and the rejoicings at wā-gyut are not less so than those at wā-win, when every one was preparing for the austerities of Lent, instead of the relaxations of the coming cold months. Accordingly the merry season is ushered in with a great feasting of the monks. This sôn-daw-gyi pwè is not so extensive, properly speaking, as the legitimate festival of that name a month later at the time of the Tawadeintha feast, and as a matter of fact is much more modest in its character in the small towns and villages.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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But in Rangoon it has assumed in recent years a form which gives a great deal of offence to all the more serious people, and is especially condemned by the austere Sulagandis. Instead of having the offerings displayed in their houses and giving them to the yahans when they come round in the grey of the morning, the new fashion with the inhabitants of Rangoon is to carry all the alms to the monastery overnight, set them up in goodly array, there and then hold receptions, sing songs, dance, play musical instruments, and generally turn the quiet monastery into the semblance of an uproarious "penny gaff." This objectionable innovation has gradually arisen out of the practice of a few of the more pious old people who at the end of Lent used to go in the evenings with ahlu for the pyinsin, listen to some pious discourses, or the recitation of some sacred zāt, and then return betimes to bed. But now the frivolous find monks not less carnal-minded than themselves. Subscriptions are raised for weeks beforehand to make a grand display. One of the yahans is asked to grant the zayat near his house for the occasion. Some of the monks of the Thayet-daw kyaung in Godwin Road, which is the chief sinner in this respect, are even so shameless as actually to go touting about for people to take their zayats, or at times even part of the monastery itself.

Then at nightfall, on the full moon, the people begin to troop in. Those who have taken the management of the almsgiving are there before. We enter by one of the little wooden bridges, and come across a pya-that, a presentation spire, immediately, glittering bright in the moonlight and the glaring torches which are gathered thick farther on among the pôngyis' dwelling-places and the mango-trees from which the monastery takes its name. The spire has just been deposited, and the band has barely stopped the music which sounds so strange within the sacred parawun. But there is more coming that will be a far greater shock to up-country notions of religious propriety. The first place we come to is a zayat, and Maung Maung, the dispenser of hospitality, recognises us and calls us up. All his female friends are arranged in a row at the back, dressed in their finest, and before them, just as at the Tasaungmôn alms-

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma (Europeans) AP1
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feast, are heaped up piles of fruits, savoury curries, cakes, biscuits, and sweetmeats of all kinds, intended for the monks; while scattered about are great *repoussé* silver bowls full of sherbet, gold and silver cups, lamps, mirrors, and all the familiar adornments, fit enough for a private house, but singularly out of place where a gay piece of tapestry hung up barely conceals the image at the eastern side of the rest-house. Maung Maung offers us some lemonade, and we light cheroots, exchange a few compliments with the ladies, and pass on, just as a noisy half-dozen of young Englishmen from one of the mercantile houses come scrambling up the ladder-like steps. It would be well if these gentlemen would remember that each of the houses is to all intents and purposes a private assembly for the night, and that, though the host always welcomes them, he understands English, and does not by any means relish the mocking comments which are lavished on everything, and still less is inclined to approve of the criticisms passed on the ladies. But then there are so few Englishmen in Burma who understand the very shortest sentence in the language that they may be pardoned if they mistake for a promiscuous saturnalia what is nominally a religious ceremony. We leave them joking with Maung Maung and the hostess, as she offers them some beer—beer in a monastery! But then it is known that Englishmen will be there, and the Burman's notion is that an Englishman only leaves off drinking beer when he drinks brandy, so this last indignity is not objected to by the yahans.

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Farther on we come to the place we are specially in search of. The master of ceremonies here is our friend Maung Po Si, a Patama Byan, a certificated theologian and long resident in Mandalay, qualified, therefore, to be a yahan himself, and from his previous experiences, one would think, not at all likely to countenance such open contempt of the provisions of the Wini, which treatise his success in the above-mentioned "theological tripos" implies that he knows by heart. But "Mr. Grandfather Oil" is very emphatically in the world of kāma; he is far from having beaten down the passions, and his place is the most startlingly secular of them all. He has got the kyaung of a myizzi mati, a pôngyi who has been ten Lents in the Order, and

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ought therefore to scorn such desecration for any purpose whatever, and certainly should not be tempted by the offer of a feast for his palate. But the fact remains that not only has he given up the front part of his kyaung, all but the elevated dais on the eastern side, where the images stand and visitors are received, but there is actually a play going on, trumpets braying, drums beating, and the bamboo clappers sounding high over all. It is a zāt, a birth-story certainly, but that does not make it any less a sin for the pôngyi to be so near, and with all those thirty pretty girls looking on too. The monk is behind the curtain which shuts off the undesecrated part of the building, it is true, but he can hardly be asleep with all that music, surely, and it is a crime for a member of the Order to listen to music. Yet who is to condemn him to penance when the prior's house is very little better? In some of the kyaungs, indeed, the younger yahans take very little trouble to conceal the fact that they are looking through the chinks of the slight hangings which cut off their sleeping-places from the noisy throng on the other side. The Englishmen, when they come round, push aside the kalagas to see what is behind, stumble over the peeping postulants, and scare the conscience-stricken "ascetics" almost out of their senses, under the impression that it is a bilu who has been enabled to gain access, and is going to devour them incontinently. Nevertheless there is no check in the revelry. It goes on until far into the night, and increases in noise the later it gets. The liquor [273] which has been brought for expected visiting foreigners cannot be left behind in the kyaungs; they are not low enough for that yet. Consequently, the laymen must drink it. The result is that as time goes on there are quarrels and fights; and in this very Thayet-daw kyaung in the Thadin-gyut of 1879 a man was stabbed and died within the limits of the parawun. Little wonder that the strict Sulagandis are gaining over many of the more respectable inhabitants of Rangoon, for even this horror has not diminished the popularity of the wāgyut alms-feast.

The noise and hubbub go on till far into the morning, and when at last the people go, the monks may be supposed to have a little rest, for they can hardly have slept much

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before, however steadily they lay on their mats. The offerings are eaten next morning, and it is greatly to be feared that there are many abstentions from the morning's round of alms-begging. Such dissipation must scatter to the winds any merit acquired by diligent piety and meditation in the long weeks of Lent. It is only to be seen in Rangoon and a few other places where many foreigners congregate. The description is from the "country mouse" point of view.

In country towns, revels of this kind are never seen, and even in Mandalay, though there are festivities in abundance, the monasteries are never invaded in this scandalous way. The difference is that between the primitive Buddhist and the highly sophisticated latitudinarian. A more harmless and decidedly prettier custom is the illumination, called taungpyi pwè, of the pagodas and the town. In Rangoon a very fine effect is produced by hanging the Sule Pagoda, in Fytche Square, all round with Chinese lanterns, from the base up to the top of the thabeit-hmauk, where the body of the shrine begins to narrow into the spire. The rings of coloured light narrowing upwards in a veritable pyramid of fire, produce one of the finest sights of the kind to be seen in the country. The street lamps, however, somewhat handicap the simple means of illumination open to the inhabitants, and to see the illumination of a town at its best one must go to a place where there are no street lamps. There all the pagodas and many of the private houses are lighted up, and the contrast to the ordinary gloom is startling. Candles are placed on posts at intervals of ten paces in every street, and the sè-eing gaungs have very plain-worded instructions as to what will happen to them if any of the lights in front of the ten houses of which they have charge go out. Mandalay Hill at such a time was a fine sight and still is, though it is no more a royal town. The two covered ways which lead up the steep uneven sides to the pagoda and the richly gilt Gautama on the top, look like streams of flame, or fiery serpents from the haunted nat-taung, under the shade of the Shan hills. But the monasteries which cluster close in to the foot of the sacred hill are all as dark and still as on any night in the middle of the Wā. No unseemly orgies are permitted there. In the town, on the

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other hand, all is noise and merriment. Bands of music and dances figure at the corners of all the chief streets, provided by the chief burghers, who take the place formerly occupied by the king himself, or by the ministers under his orders. The capital used to be crowded with umbrella-bearing chiefs and officials, Shan sawbaws, and chieftains of the mountain tribes all come down with their bands of wild followers to do homage to the Lord of the Rising Sun, for the greatest of the kadaw-né, the beg-pardon days, was always immediately after Lent. Having brought their minds into a sedate and tranquil state by the observances of the Wā, it was fitting that men should come and make submission and do obeisance at the golden feet. Mandalay is a very different town now from what it was in royal times, but the old traditions still linger.

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At the same season there is an illumination on the river. As soon as it is dark the villagers row out into the middle of the stream and set adrift a multitude of little oil-lamps, each fastened to a little float of bamboo or plantain stems. The lamps are simply little earthenware cups filled with oil, and each supplied with a small piece of cotton for a wick. Thousands of them are sent out by a single village, and the sight from a steamer suddenly rounding a bend and coming upon a bank of these little stars of light afloat on the river is very singular. In the distance it looks like a regular sea of flame, and as there is plenty of oil, on the night of the full moon there is a constant succession of these shoals of twinkling lights floating down the whole length of the Irrawaddy from above Bhamaw to China Buckeer, every village sending its contingent.

This ceremony, called ye-hpaung hmyaw thi, or mi-hpaung hmyaw thi, launching water or fire rafts, is in remembrance of a universally honoured payā-ngè, a lesser divinity called Shin Upago, who lives down at the bottom of the river in a kyi-pya-that, a brazen spire, where he zealously keeps the sacred days. In a former existence he carried off the clothes of a bather, and for this mischievous pleasantry is condemned to remain in his present quarters till Arimadeya, the next Buddha, shall come. Then he will be set free, and entering the thenga will become a

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yahanda, and attain Ne'ban. He is a favourite subject for pictures, which represent him sitting under his brazen roof, or on the stump of a tree, eating out of an alms-bowl, which he carries in his arms. Sometimes he is depicted gazing sideways up to the skies, where he seeks a place that is not polluted by corpses. Such a spot is not to be found on earth, where every stock and stone is but the receptacle of a departed spirit. The notion is like that of the Tibetan monks, who look upon the earth as simply a vast graveyard. They carry human finger-joints strung together for a rosary, eat their food out of a human skull, and instead of horns for trumpets use the bones of a man's forearm. "We are dead," they say, "and dead men have nothing to do with the things of the living."

Of a similar character to this illuminating of the pagodas, the town, and the river, is the letting loose of fire-balloons, from the end of Lent to the Tawadeintha festival in Tasaungmôn. The balloons are sometimes very big, but they are simple enough structures. A bamboo framework is covered over with the thick, coarse, home-made paper manufactured from the bark of the mahlaingbin (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which also supplies the material for the black parabaik note-books. At the bottom, across the open mouth of the balloon, is a little platform, on which pitch is heaped, and with torches attached to it. The balloon is then tethered to the ground. The torches and resinous matter are lighted, and when the strain on the stays is considered sufficient, they are cut, and the balloon goes off. They are dangerous in large towns, and are forbidden there, but the Burman considers that the law applies only to the ground round the town, and dozens are let off every year from spots only a hundred yards or so outside of municipal limits. Not unseldom dôn, rockets, and other kinds of fire-works are attached to them, not by any means tending to make them safer for the houses below. This mi-eing byan, as it is called, is in honour of the Sula-mani payā, a pagoda erected in Tawadeintha, over Mount Myinmo, by the Thagya, king of the Nat-dêwas. When Prince Theidat left his palace, his wife, and forsook all to become a Buddha, he rode as far as the river Anawma and leaped over it on his famous

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527 506 steed Kantika. Then he drew his sword, cut off his long hair and threw it into the air, where it remained suspended, till the Tha-gya-min carried it off in a basket and had his Sula-mani shrine built over it. Hence the offering of fire-balloons.

527 Thus offerings are made on earth, water, and in the air. The whole month, from the full moon which ends Lent till the feast commemorative of the nogāna alms of Thuzata, is distinguished by specially abundant ahlu to the pagodas and to the beikku. A peculiarly pretty offering is that called a pan-taing, a pyramid somewhat like a pya-that, entirely composed of flowers in wreaths and nosegays, which is conducted with much dancing and sounds of music, to be laid before the great image. Fantastic tin shrines and lanterns made to hold big, two-inch thick candles, often plaited of long tapers made of different coloured wax, are presented, and along with these, huge monkish fans, each adorned round the edge with tags of gold-leaf and little pictures; big muslin dragons distended on hoops and long streamers to be hung from the poles surmounted with the sacred hentha, or the kalawaik, are also frequent. It is also customary at this season to make the monks large offerings of honey—pya-ye hlu-thi. This can hardly be called a separate festival, but as the honey is only given in these months, it affords sufficient cause for the exhibition of plays and energetic dancing on the way to the monastery.

776 527 All these religious observances, sufficiently mixed up with secular enjoyment, are accompanied by other occupations which cannot be said to have anything directly to do with religion. Such is the preparation of the boats, and the practice for the races, which always take place in Thadin-gyut. They must wait, however, till Lent is over; and the racing boats are almost always kept under the abodes of the yahans, so that even here there is ground for the assertion that all great public feasts in Burma are connected with religion. But the Burmans are very far from being sad worshippers, and any one who has been in the country in the months of October and November would be inclined to assert that the whole round of existence in Burma is made up of junketings and pleasure-parties.

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When there is a boat-race, the opposing crews have a preliminary row over the course with offerings placed on the prow for the nat who guards that stretch of the river. And so on through numberless examples. Some nats achieve fame, and are known far and wide by special appellations. Such is Maung In Gyi, a spirit who is feared in all the district round Rangoon, and away eastward and northward as far as Pegu. He lives in the water, and causes death. A special festival is celebrated in his honour, or rather in deprecation, in the month of Waso, the same in which Lent begins. Others more especially known in Upper Burma are Byindôn, Shwe Pyin-Gyi and his brother, and a drunkard nat called Maung Min Gyaw, to whom great quantities of rice spirit are offered. Uyingyi is a spirit universally known among the Talaings. The chief spirit of a district usually goes by the name of A-shin Gyi, the great lord, or, among the Talaings, Okkaya. Then there are generic names; there is the Hmin nat who lives in woods, and shakes those he meets so that they go mad. There is the Upaka, who flies about in the clouds to spy out men whom he may snap up. There is the Akakaso who lives in the tops of trees, Shekkaso who lives in the trunk, and Bumaso who is content with a dwelling in the roots. The presence of spirits or witches in trees may always be ascertained by the quivering and trembling of the leaves when all around are still.

The Talaings, and many of the Burmans in the Irrawaddy delta, have a regular nat-feast just before harvesting begins. The figure of a woman is fashioned out of straw, and a tamein, kerchief, and other portions of female dress placed along with it in a bullock cart. Great quantities of kauk-hnyin, "sticky rice," are heaped up, and the whole driven in procession round the ripe paddy fields. The figure is then set up in the place where the paddy is to be stored, and the offerings are usually swept away by the boys of the place, whose appetites overcome their fear of the nats, Bumadi, the guardian of the earth, and Nagyi, the guardian of the grain, to propitiate whom the feast is held.

There is a theory that persons who are executed or meet a violent death become nats and haunt the place where they

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643 linen jacket and a slender pawlôn (a fillet of book-muslin wound round the head), showing the thin white hair tied up in a little knot on the top of the head. The chief ministers are round about, fanning him assiduously; and he is in extreme good-humour, chaffing the Kin Wungyi, the astute prime minister, on the way he let his bullocks straggle away at random and the difficulties he got into in trying to turn them at the end of the field; while the stout old Naingan-gya Wun-dauk is rallied about the absurd state of heat he was brought into by his exertions. Possibly, if a venture-some and inquisitive subject were to be seen now, the king might pardon him for his rude gaping. But nobody knows in what temper the king is, and the silence is as death-like as when the party moved out. As soon, however, as the great procession has passed and has wound its way into the palace, the hitherto deserted streets are crowded again. Pwès begin with startling suddenness at every corner. Bands strike up; long lines of candles illuminate the streets at nightfall; rockets are let off, fire-balloons ascend, and every-thing is given up to rejoicing; for the lèdawgyi has been graciously ploughed, and the Lètwin mingala is a presage of abundant crops.

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It is needless to say that the persons mentioned are now all dead and that the British Government does not maintain the Lètwin mingala. The spectacle of the Lieu-tenant-Governor balancing himself on a harrow with the Commissioner of the Northern Division and the Judicial Commissioner for Upper Burma as acólytes, or rivals, would not be impressive. A striking spectacle has gone and cannot be revived.

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CHAPTER XXV

A HARVEST FEAST

ONE of the pleasantest and most social of Burmese country festivals is the ceremony which goes by the name of Tamanè Hto-thi. It occurs in the month of Ta'saungmôn, or of Na'daw, when the harvest is over and the first of the new rice piled up in a heap near the farmer's house, or perhaps stowed away in the capacious bottom of the hnaw, the big rice-boat, with its stern rising ten or fifteen feet above the surface of the water, and ready to start for Rangoon whenever its owner shall have hit upon a lucky day for commencing the voyage. In order to acquire a store of merit as well towards the next existence as towards the journey immediately in view; to back up the verdict of the astrologer from the horoscope with the good wishes of the holy men of the monastery; and, above all, to have a feast such as generally comes in somewhere in all Burmese religious proceedings, the cultivator resolves to give away twenty baskets or so of rice in alms and presents to the yellow-robed monks and his neighbours. A special kind of rice is always used on these occasions. Englishmen generally are unaware probably that there are a great number of varieties of rice, and that they differ very much in their flavour. Most people imagine that all rice has the same taste (no taste, they would probably say); and distinguish in a rough material way between Patna rice, which is very small, and Rangoon rice, which is considerably larger in the grain, and finally Carolina rice, which is bigger than any of them. A Rangoon merchant would go a little farther, and say that there are two varieties—the nga-sein, which he likes best and gets most of, and the nga-kyauk, which comes in more sparingly. But beyond these—

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243 and they are not the varieties most in favour with the Burmese for their own consumption—there are at least thirty different kinds. There is the byat sabā, the "tray" rice, which is considered the best, but, like most of the other sorts, will not stand the rough treatment of the steam mill-stones, and breaks in pieces. Then there is the myi-she, which has a long awn, and the myi-tôn, which has no awn at all; the taung-pyan, "winged rice," and the nga-chywè, "buffalo grain"; and so on through a long list, ending up with "black rice," which is not by any means bad eating. But of
● 527 all the kinds, kauk-hnyin, "sticky rice," is the variety always
262 used at the harvest feast. It is mixed with thin sliced cocoa-nut, sesamum seeds, ginger, onions, and pepper, all stirred together and well boiled; and the resulting mess is called tamanè. The rice is well named. It is very emphatically sticky, and even when taken alone is not very easily digested; but when it comes in the form of tamanè, the result is usually a widespread attack of colic throughout the village. This, however, comes after the festival, when the fun is all over, and does not concern us in any way.

574 When the farmer has made up his mind as to the day
527 on which he is going to have the feast—a date which, of
[787] course, cannot be settled without consulting the wise men of the village and much pondering over the palm-leaf horoscope—he sends out a few boys with a number of packets of "pickled tea" to all the young men in the place, requesting them to be good enough to eat it and to come without fail that night to his homestead in order to help him to husk his rice for the tamanè hto-thi. A few girls are also asked to come; and they bring their friends for the sake of company, and the mothers follow for the sake of propriety. Thus there is quite a large assemblage at the farmer's when night falls and the business is to commence. There is a good deal of preliminary tea-drinking and smoking of cheroots and chewing of betel and le'hpet, and a great deal of laughing and talking. The girls profess to be astonished to find so many young men there; they had not imagined their host was meditating such extensive preparations, and thought there would be nobody there but his own and his wife's younger brothers. That is exactly what they will say next week

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when they attend a similar assemblage at Htun Aung's house at the other end of the village.

But after an hour or so they settle down to do a little work. The young men—kālathas, they call themselves—"Corinthians, lads of mettle"—have brought with them a number of wooden mortars, with a heavy pestle working on a lever; and these they set up and commence to husk the rice. The process is very simple. A few handfuls of the paddy are thrown into the mortar, the workers step off and on the lever which raises and lets fall the solid wooden pestle, and the husk is every now and then blown out and the grain stirred up a little. The Burmans infinitely prefer rice husked in the national way to that which is sent out from the European steam-mills. The big Derbyshire or composite stones do their work only too effectually; they take off not only the hard shell, but also the inner cuticle of the grain, which contains the chief flavour; and, moreover, the heat which the steady grinding induces, scorches out a great deal of what taste remains. Therefore at every house there is to be found the primitive national apparatus in which the girls of the household every morning or evening prepare the rice for the day's consumption. But to-night they are relieved from such hard work. The village youths for once in a way exert themselves; and all the girls have to do is to wash out a few dishes and prepare the bamboo-lacquered platters, the pyramidal ôk, in which the tamanè is to be carried to the yahans and the pagoda to-morrow, and get ready the palm-leaves in which less exalted people will receive their modicum of the stew. The whole actual work might be finished in little over an hour, but that is the intention neither of the giver of alms nor of the assembled young men and maidens. They have come much more for merriment than for merit. Else why that great pile of le'hpet? For the condiment is an anti-soporific, and if you take enough of it, you will be able to see all through a forty-eight hours' play, and give your friends an outline of the plot before you lapse into a slumber lasting twice round the clock.

Accordingly, after a quarter of an hour's work, the "prince" of the local amateur dramatic company jumps off his perch, and commences the "White Dove" song from the

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are recorded with enthusiasm and delighted precision of detail; and when an hour or so has been passed in this way, a little more rice-husking is done, and the girls set to work getting ready the onions and sesamum seed, and slicing up the cocoa-nut kernels. This sort of thing goes on all the night through. There is half an hour's work, and then an hour of singing and story-telling and gossip; about the great Shinbinthalyaung, the gigantic recumbent image of Shin Gautama dug up lately near Pegu; of the two min-laungs, the embryo kings, who have been revealed there, and the third one, who is foretold by the old theit-sa, the prophecy which declares that he will restore the ancient Talaing kings and revive religion; of the new hti which is being set up on the pagoda of the lotus tank, and its exceeding splendour, each single one of the concentric rings having been assigned as a particular favour to one out of many competing districts. Then there is a discussion as to the new fashion of turbans, the one plain colour with worked flowers on it, which has supplemented the old thinner style with more braid-like patterns; and the present rage for waist-cloths with many-coloured stripes in place of the old wavy and dog's-tooth fashion. Then the girls are rallied about the method in which they dress their hair—all of them in the style just declared treasonable in the upper country. Queen Supayalat has hit upon some particular set, or plaiting of her tresses, which she thinks becomes her very well, and a royal order has come out making it penal for any meaner damsels to adopt the same method. Consequently all the maidens from Taungoo to Kyauk-Hpyu and the A-eng Pass to Malawun have made up after the queenly model and flatter themselves that it is *chic*. There are always ghost stories at these gatherings, tales about the three farmer brothers that were killed just after harvest time three years ago, and now haunt the dense patch of swampy jungle down by the creek as nat seins, and sometimes scare the fishermen out of a night's work by the violent agitation of the tree-tops on a still night; and then there is that old hag in the lone house at the far end of the village, who is certainly a witch; it must have been she who gave the old sikkè the tet, poor old man, and he a payā-tagā too, founder

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527 of the pagoda on the slope of the "Brother and Sister Hill";
521 and there is little Ma Mi; the old beldam looked at her over
[754] the fence on the fifth of last waning, and the poor thing lost her sweetheart before the change of the moon, and had all her fine false hair stolen only three days ago: proof enough that of the *jettatura*.

527 It is long past midnight, when all the cocks of the village crow together, deriving their knowledge of the exact time from the diet of burnt astrological books, pecked at by their ancestors long ago, when the objection to cabalistic works was much more violent than it is nowadays; and sometimes daylight is coming in, and the sound of the morning chant steals over from the monastery, when the party breaks up and all go home. The kauk hnyin has been all husked, and, mixed up with the other ingredients, is simmering away over the fire. Every one has a virtuous consciousness of having gained considerable kutho in addition to having spent a very agreeable time. Few go to sleep. They have eaten too much le'hpet for that, and in an hour or two some of them will be wanted again to take the tamanè round. That is done about eight o'clock in the case of the monks. The farmer himself and his family carry it to the monastery in the spire-shaped lacquer-box, and having paid the usual reverence, deposit it before the superior, who looks on calmly without a word of thanks, or even the semblance of a recognition, but says before they go, that if they keep the Ten Precepts and live virtuously, they will escape the Four States of Punishment and be delivered from the Five Enemies. Then the "supporters" wheel on the right, and depart home to make up the portions for all their friends and neighbours. These are usually taken round by the girls, who go in bevies of three or four, dressed in their finest clothes and with flowers in their hair, and deliver the dainty with compliments, and injunctions to eat it immediately. By six o'clock in the evening, when the sonorous wooden bell of the monastery is summoning in all the scholars, the entire village is asleep; and they do not get up very early next morning. Nobody in the whole place has been drunk; and if there is an opium-eater in the village, he was not asked to the feast and had none of the tamanè.

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in the river Neritzara, at a place where more than 100,000 Buddhas had bathed, before obtaining the supreme intelligence. Then he divided the nogana into forty-nine mouthfuls, ate it, and mounted the throne, whereon he sat for forty-nine days tasting no food, and combating Mān Nat, the spirit of death and sin. But ere he lapsed into meditation he threw his golden bowl into the river. It ascended the stream swiftly, floated steadily for a short time, and then sank in a whirlpool far down, leagues beyond the earth into the country of the nagās, where it fell against the golden bowls of the three previous Budhs with a clang that resounded throughout the four worlds, and all things worshipped the present Lord:

> King and high Conqueror! thine hour is come.
> This is the night the ages waited for.

This event in the life of Shin Gautama is commemorated in the Sôndawgyi pwè. Sōnthi is a sacred word set apart to denote the eating of members of the Holy Assembly, and, in remembrance of Thuzata's historic offering, the mendicants are feasted annually by the pious, with a splendour and profusion far exceeding the ordinary alms poured daily with unstinting hand into the begging-bowl. The date of the feast does not exactly correspond with the original event. According to the chronicle, the Lord Buddha attained the first state of ne'ban in the month of Kasôn, about April, whereas the feast of Tawadeintha, with which the Sôndawgyi is always immediately connected, is celebrated after Lent, at the full moon of Ta'saung-môn in November. The festival is essentially one of the town rather than of the country. Except the New Year's Feast, none of the religious celebrations can be really called universal, and the Sôndawgyi perhaps least of all. Villages and small country towns cannot get together the splendour necessary to distinguish the occasion from the ordinary domestic feasts, or even from the daily almsgiving to the mendicants. It is therefore in a large town like Rangoon, where there is a certain amount of money, and a facility for acquiring or borrowing ornaments and frippery, that the festivities are best seen. There the *fête*—the word is more appropriate

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527 than any implying more of a religious character—assumes the appearance of a gigantic reception, or *conversazione*. Streets and quarters of the town make up a common purse for general decorations and the erection of stages for hired troupes of actors, in addition to individual effort. The dates are arranged beforehand so that no two streets shall make their effort on the same night, and so lessen the enjoyment of the public, or draw away from the expected number of spectators. A committee is elected, or appoints itself, and having got as much money as possible, hires the best available dancers and actors for the zat pwè, if possible a puppet troupe also, and in addition, as many unattached mummers and clowns as can be got, whose business it is to dance up and down the street in the guise of dragons, snakes, nagās, and demons of all sorts, and amuse such of the visitors as cannot get near enough to see the set play, or prefer walking about talking to their acquaintances. Bands are engaged in profusion, flower-garlanded arches erected at the ends of the street and at intervals along its length, and gay Chinese lanterns hung up everywhere. Complimentary packets of le'hpet, pickled tea, serving as invitations, are sent out in profusion, but the non-receipt of one of these does not deter anybody, and all comers of whatever nationality are welcome.

735 262 Nowadays the monks are wont to complain that the presents customarily made them at the Tawadeintha feast are not nearly so valuable, or even so satisfactory, as they used to be. But it is different with the Sôndawgyi *fête*. There the emblems of the archetypal nogana are all edible and of the most sumptuous kind. In every house the offerings for the ascetics are set out for display all night long and make a goodly show, if the process can hardly be supposed to improve them for consumption. Mountains of cooked rice send out spurs of beef and pork, with flat lands of dried fish and outlying peaks of roasted ducks and fowls, the legs with their claws and the neck with the head and beak being extended as if they had been drawn out tight to exhibit their greatest length. Ngapi, fish paste, in all its malodorous varieties of ngapigaung, seinsa, dhamin, nga-thalauk, abounds, and loads the air with suggestions of a fish-

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curing village, or an unclean fishmonger's in the dog days. Chinese patties of sugar and fat pork, plates full of fried silkworms, maggots from the top of the cocoa-nut tree, salt-pickled ginger and fried garlic, and a variety of other dishes beyond the ken of occidental cookery, abound all down the long tables. Alternating with these, and perhaps more pleasant to look at, are heaps of fruit, oranges, citrons, shaddocks, plantains, with here and there a late durian or two, rivalling the ngapi in its odour, and the brick-red or purple rind that conceals the luscious "snows" of the delicious mangosteen. Plentiful tins of sardines and Reading biscuits, with somewhat muddy-looking Bengali-made lemonade, give evidence of the progress of "civilisation"; and plates of betel with the fresh green leaves of the betel-vine suggest how the morrow's afternoon will be passed in well-filled meditations by the pôngyis of the neighbouring monastery.

The house itself is decked out on a corresponding scale of magnificence. To the uninitiated foreigner an ordinary Burmese hut presents about as unfavourable raw material for decoration as can well be imagined. Built of rough teak planking, or of split bamboo mats, and raised a few feet off the ground on posts, it resembles a marquee tent in shape and in size (according to the principle of the old Joe Miller story about the stone which was as big as a lump of chalk). On all ordinary occasions there is not a vestige of furniture in it. A row of earthenware pots with water, a couple of wooden boxes, and the rolled-up mats and blankets whereon the household sleep, are the only things to be seen. The sides and ceiling are grimed with the smoke of the fire that cooks the daily meals; the floor stained with smudges of oil and red blotches of betel. Yet this unpromising shanty the Burman transforms into a palace chamber, or stage-like fairy bower. The sides of the house are thrown up towards the street, so that the room assumes the appearance of a verandah. The floor is covered with thick bamboo matting, finely woven, over which bright-flowered rugs are spread. The dingy sides of the house are draped with flags and kullagâs, elaborate stitched pieces of tapestry, ten or twelve feet long, and reaching down to the ground. White, or

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brilliant-coloured chintz, or paper, forms a roof studded with red, blue, or green stars and rosettes of tinsel paper. Great mirrors, swinging and other lamps, statuettes of wood or stucco, candlesticks with glass shades, clocks, German half-crown engravings, and gay Chinese lanterns hang or stand about. The floor is literally covered with silver and gold cups and betel-boxes, of all sizes, from that of a soup-tureen down to a breakfast cup. Some are plain; some of that *repoussé* work at which the Burmese silversmiths are so clever. The great majority of these are of course borrowed from friends (of another street or quarter) or hired for the night from the chetty pawnbrokers. A few chairs and tables stand about for any European visitors who may come, and they are sure of a friendly welcome. At the back of the room in a long line, behind the mirrors and statuettes, sit the girls, decked out in their most expensively embroidered skirts and gayest silk neckerchiefs. They are literally loaded with jewellery. Round their necks and over the bosom hangs the broad network of the dalizan, formed of silver or gold fishes and flowers linked together. The nadaung, the huge gold plugs or circlets in their ears, sparkle with rubies and emeralds. So do the bracelets on their arms and the rings on their fingers. Each girl as she sits is worth many hundred rupees. It is probably for this reason that they are made so inaccessible, seated behind the lamps and lights. If admiring swains could get at them, so could other individuals, whose regard for the jewellery might exceed that for the commandments. The young women may therefore be supposed not to care so much for the Sôndawgyi *fête* as their brothers. Most of the girls are of course daughters of the house. If, however, the householder has not womankind enough, he simply goes into the bazaar and hires as many personable-looking damsels as he may find necessary. They are as much a part of the display as the silver cups and the looking-glasses. A band at one end of the room discourses music fitfully. Occasionally a girl, too young to have attained to the dignity of jewellery, gets up and dances and sings for a while. Musical instruments of different kinds, pattala, hnè, and migyaung, harmonicons, trumpets, and alligator guitars, lie scattered about here and

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there for the amusement of skilled visitors, and there is always somebody thrumming or tootling away on them.

The whole scene is an unceasing round of laughter and gaiety. The host and hostess and a few old women bustle about and receive the visitors, point out the most noteworthy parts of the display, have a few words of conversation, and offer refreshments. The guest drinks a cup of singularly washy and saccharine tea or lemonade, smokes a big green cheroot, or chews a fid of betel, compliments the owner of the house, declares he never saw so much magnificence in his life, and departs to go through the same performance in the next house. Englishmen are always welcome. Seats are brought for them; the master of the house sits by while they are under his roof, explains everything to the best of his ability, and produces the inevitable bottle of brandy or beer, without which no European is supposed to be able to endure existence. The reception begins at eight, or half-past, and lasts for an hour and a half or so. Then every one who is coming has arrived, and has gone the round of his friends, so that the domestic display is pretty well over. The gorgeously-arrayed females gather up their skirts, and go off home under a guard of their male relatives, and having put off the greater part of their jewellery, come back, each with a huge green cheroot in her mouth, to see the play and join in the fun. A few of the older people remain indoors, steadily chewing betel, comparing notes as to past displays, and speculating as to whether any other street in the town will be able to surpass the display of Eighteenth Street. Not a few placidly go to sleep, notwithstanding the din without, the strident sounds of the band, the shouts at the buffoonery of the clown, and the confused chatter of thousands of voices. Outside there is no slackening in the jollity. From the lofty stage representing the second heaven of the nats, portions of the Law are declaimed; the celestial beings deliver themselves of suggagyi, lordly sentiments, revellings in exuberant verbosity, all night long, and the constantly-shifting audience never thins away. Farther up the street a huge pasteboard demon is gambolling unwieldily, half-a-dozen dancers twirling and twisting vigorously within a foot or two of its great tusked jaws. At intervals some of the youths of the street,

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or some of the visitors, worked into a state of excitement by the music, dance enthusiastically in an unattached kind of fashion for a few minutes, and then suddenly break off with a laugh. Some of the young men spend most of the time flitting about the extemporised stalls, tasting at one place fish jelly, at another queer salads, having a violent flavour of garlic; here smoking a cheroot, there chewing a packet of pickled tea, and flirting in turn with all the girl vendors, who look very coquettish with the red or white flowers in their glossy black hair, and the fragrant, yellow thanaka toning down their complexion. Not in the least shy they are, and quite ready to bandy Oriental compliments with new acquaintances. It is with many of the younger folks the pleasantest part of the feast—and is not the old duenna sitting behind—what matter though she is asleep—to play propriety? And so the merriment goes on all night, fit occupation provided for all: sleep or high moral declaimings, combined with the clown's comedy, for the elderly; abundance to eat, and a surfeit of gossip for the lazy and middle-aged; and indiscriminate love-making and dancing and noise for the young. At length, with dawn of day, which in those low latitudes corresponds with the rising of the sun, the ascetics come round in grave yellow procession, their hands clasped round the thabeit, their eyes downcast. The bowls are filled, the rest of the feast is carried humbly to the monastery by the donors, and the Eighteenth Street Sôndawgyi pwè is over. The celebrators sleep all day; the state of digestion of the monks is not a matter for discussion; and those visitors who have got new ideas from what they saw last night, lose no time in making use of them for the better glorification of their own *fête*, which comes off a few days later.

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is far away, and there will be no rain for months. Another day or two will suffice to bake and split into long fissures the bottom of the puddle, wherein are yet hundreds of animate things, from the whiskered mud-fish to the lordly hilsa, the salmon of India. Then the seekers after merit come out, bearing with them big chatties, huge earthenware jars, the size of some of which makes the story of *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* seem very much more credible. Girls and boys, old men and old women, go tramping about in the soft slush, capturing the fish and dropping them into the jars of water. Great laughter there is over the wild plunges and flounderings of the boys, the little screams and "a-mè lele, a-mè le-taw" of the girls as they step upon a fish, which whizzes away with a suddenness that is apt to disturb the equilibrium, or slip with one le[illegible] slowly but irremediably into a hole—perhaps a last y[illegible]'s buffalo-wallow—out of which they are only extricated after much teasing and tickling by the boys. Then there is the stalking and driving of a great nga-gyi into a corner, whence with a flop and a muddy dash he escapes into the middle again, amidst a chorus of the inevitable amè! ("mother") which springs to a Burman's lips on all possible and unexpected occasions. There is the caution to be observed in seizing the stinging mud-fish, the gingerliness with which, when he is caught, the waving whiskers are avoided; especially the control over yourself to be maintained if he does sting you, lest you should spoil all your chance of merit in a moment of irritation, by doing him an injury. Sometimes the fish are caught in nets; but this reckless wastefulness in the matter of combining merit with merriment is not very favourably viewed by the neighbourhood.

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At last the fish are all caught and crowded together in the sin-o—the water-jars. There is, perhaps, a considerable pause before they are liberated. The nga-hlut pwè usually occurs a little after the carnival of the water feast, when everybody is doused with water; and if the fish have been rescued from their danger some time before that, they have to wait in their uncomfortable quarters all the longer. The *fête* seems to be celebrated with more enthusiasm in Maulmein than in any other large town in Lower Burma.

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In Rangoon the spruce merchants' clerks are apt to sneer at it as a "jungle feast," and rather laugh at the gatherings on the banks of the "Great Royal Lake." But in Maulmein it is different. There everybody enters into the spirit of the thing with religious fervour. A great procession is formed, and winds its way along the long snake-like up-and-down street that constitutes the great part of the town. At the head comes a band of young men dancing—some with their faces whitened with chalk, others grimed with soot; some extravagantly dressed as princes and ogres, others scantily arrayed in a tucked-up waist-cloth—capering and prancing along with the waving of hands and fantastic pacings characteristic of the national dancing. Behind them, in a bullock cart, is the band, the huge saing-waing, the circular frame with its octaves of drums, on which the performer, smoking a big green cheroot all the while, thumps away with great vigour and in excellent time, accompanied by some trumpets, a flute or two, and a young fellow with a noisy bamboo clapper. Then there is an indiscriminate crowd of well-dressed, excited people, carrying huge umbrellas, white and gold; big spires; young fellows on hobby-horses; men with long bamboos, gilt from butt to tip, looking like fishing-rods, with which one might bob for whales. Mingled with these are the carts carrying the jars of fish. In the middle is a great long platform on wheels, supporting a pasteboard and bamboo and painted mat model of a steamboat. The captain, in a gold-bordered cap, occupies the greater part of the ship forward, and yells orders to the man at the helm, who ports and starboards with surprising rapidity and impartiality. The chief engineer divides his time between stoking up the smouldering cigar-stump and the cotton which supplies the smoke from the funnel, and whistling violently on his fingers. A man stands at the side, heaving the lead (a joint of bamboo stuffed with cotton). It seems to be "And a half, nine," when some one is hit on the head, and "tin bām milla ne"—three fathoms and no bottom—when the lead fails to touch anybody. A lady in English dress, with her face brought to the proper colour with chalk, represents the passengers. This performer is of course a boy, and usually affords most

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amusement to both native and English spectators. The fun goes on all the way with jokes at the expense both of the performers and the lookers-on, and shouts and roars of laughter at every new buffoonery. At last they reach the spot on the river-bank selected for freeing the fish, and after a few pious formulæ have been recited, the contents of the jars are capsized into the water. Many of the fish are already dead, and not a few are so sickly that there is little chance of their escaping being eaten by cannibal brethren; but this does not disturb the equanimity of any one. A great kaunghmu has been done, much merit has been gained, and there has been great fun over it. The motley procession wends its way back again, and everybody goes at nightfall to see the great kyi-gyin pwè given by some public-spirited and drama-loving quarter or street in the town.

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CHAPTER XXXV

THE NEW YEAR'S FEAST

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ALTHOUGH religious festivals and *fêtes* are so abundant in Burma, it is undoubtedly true that none of them are universally observed in all parts of the country, except the New Year's Feast. In localities where the people are exceptionally pious, the end of Lent may be more carefully observed than elsewhere, some devoting themselves especially to pious observances, others to the more worldly ceremonies of the sôndawgyi feast. The Tawadeintha festival is an annual observance in some districts, in others it practically passes over unnoticed. Similarly with all the minor *fêtes*. But it is not so with the thi'gyan pwè. All over Burma, from the smallest jungle hamlet to the crowded streets of Rangoon and the straggling suburbs of Mandalay, the New Year is ushered in with the old formalities, and with perennial enthusiasm. Not an hour is cut off from the allotted number of days, and every item of the old practice is carried out with the same vigour.

For this reason the "Water Feast," as it is called by Englishmen, has forced itself on the attention of the most careless observer, and every one who has written about Burma devotes a greater or less amount of space to a description of the good-humoured merriment with which the New Year is introduced. I do not propose, therefore, to do more than allude to the lesser known formalities observed on the occasion.

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The month Tagoo, the first of the Burman year, occurs in the spring, and New Year's Day is in the earlier half of April. But it does not fall annually on the same day. It

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in itself, but serves as a most satisfactory corroboration of the truth of the events prognosticated by the movements and surroundings of the tha-gyā king. The conclusions are all carefully noted down in the thi'gyan sa, and great piles of these are carefully preserved in the archives of the monkish library, seldom to be looked at again.

Besides the events which are to happen in the coming year the astrologers are also able to determine whether the tha-gyā min will remain three days or four days upon earth. If he stays three days it is called a matulè year, if four, tawtulè, and the water-throwing is carried on a corresponding time.

All these points are settled some time beforehand, so that every one in the remotest part of the country may have due notice, and then information is sent to the heads of monasteries, and the chief districts, and all is made ready to receive his nat-majesty with proper honours. When at last the day comes round, all are on the watch, and when the wise men give the signal, tha-gyā min kyabyi, the king has come down, a cannon is fired off, and forthwith all the people come out of doors with pots full of water, the mouths of the jars filled up with fresh green leaves and twigs of the sacred tha-bye tree. A formal prayer is said, and the water is poured out on the ground, and all are happy. Many years ago an event happened which singularly impressed true believers in the royal city. Just when expectation was at its highest and all ears were strained in expectation of the roar of the cannon, there was a terrific thunderclap, which made all the town quiver, and demonstrated the accuracy of the pônnas' calculations. There was no more thunder that night, and the ranks of the pious received great increase during the ensuing week. In country towns and villages every one who has a gun rushes out into the street at the appointed hour and fires it off. Most wonderful blunderbusses and old flintlocks and ancient rusty horse-pistols make their appearance, warranted to make a noise, but capable of little more. After this ceremony is over a few go to bed,—for the descent is usually made at midnight,—but the majority sit up and talk.

With the earliest glimmer of light all rise, and taking

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805 pots full of fresh clean water, carry them off to the monastery
527 to present them to the monks—not to throw over them, such liberties are never taken with the brethren. After having
783 made their kadaw, "begged pardon with water," to the
527 sacred order, they set off to the pagoda and there com-
805 mence the yethôn pwè, the washing of the images. It is not to be supposed that these really require cleansing any more than the recluses do, but it renders them myatta-thappè, an expression not to be rendered by many words in English. It combines all the meanings of cleanliness, beauty, stateliness, proper position, majesty, and repose; and the laving with water is merely a recognition of this fact. The work is usually done by women, and they reverently clamber up and capsize their silver and earthenware goblets of water over the placid features. There are scores of them at work, and the ceremony is soon finished. Then all set off home again, and the jovial part of the festivities begin. All along the road are urchins with squirts and syringes, made of tin and bamboo, with which they have been furtively practising for the last few days, and their experience develops itself in extreme accuracy in catching you with a stream of water in the ear. Young men and girls salute one another mostly with cups and goblets of water, and stifled screams and shouts of merriment rise everywhere. Before breakfast every one is soaked, but no one changes, for it is fine warm weather, and there is lots more water to come.

805 During the day there is a regular going round to pay
527 the compliments of the season. It was a great kadaw day in the palace at Mandalay, and all the nobles and officials went to "beg-pardon," and worship at the golden feet—not with water, however. Similarly inferiors pay their respects to their superiors and masters, children to their parents, scholars to their teachers, and juniors generally to seniors There is water everywhere, more especially on those parts of your dress which cling most uncomfortably to you. The girls are the most enthusiastic in the matter, and as they generally go in bands and have a copious reservoir in the shape of big jars along with them, the unprotected male is routed in no time. Some zealous people go down to the river or creek, wade into the water knee-deep, and splash

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water at one another till they are tired and the thing begins to seem monotonous. No one escapes; in fact no one would care to get through the three days with dry clothes, for the wetting is considered a compliment. A clerk comes up to his master, shikhos to him, and gravely pours the contents of a silver cup down the back of his neck, saying ye-kadaw mi, "I will do homage to you with water." A polite but less humble form of speech is ye-laung-thi, to "pour" water over; while equals, and the young people generally, yepetthi, "splash" one another with the utmost vigour. It is to be observed that dirty water is never used. The barbaric innovation of squirts is a sign of decadence.

Foreigners do not object to the custom, except perhaps some of the more pompous and stolid natives of India, whose minds are incapable of appreciating a joke in any form whatever. The rollicking Chinaman takes it up with the utmost zeal, and sets about the thing in the most business-like way. The last time I was in Maulmein one of the storekeepers in the main street had rigged up a garden hydrant in front of his house and connected it with the well. A coolie was engaged to work it all day, and a continuous jet of water, sufficient to put out a small conflagration, streamed from the nozzle the entire duration of the feast. Not only was Boon Tek enabled to drench everybody, but he advertised his machines and made a good thing of it.

But the Chinaman was exceeded in zeal by a young Englishman in Prome, not many years ago. He was a Government official, and there were two friends dining with him. A note came round to him from a neighbour in the next street saying that the yepetthi girls were out and would be round his way shortly. So he forthwith made preparations. The Madrasi "boys" got a huge bath tub on to the verandah, and tin pannikins were placed handy, and the dinner proceeded. But unfortunately there was no one put to watch for the arrival of the girls, and the first notice of their appearance was a well-directed stream of water in the nearest man's shirt-front. To sally forth was the work of an instant, but it was found that the tub was in the possession of the enemy, and only served to eke out the abundant

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supply they had brought with them in big silver bowls. The three Englishmen were soaked through at the first discharge. But the Assistant Commissioner was not to be discomfited so easily. He rushed through a perfect cascade, and seizing the first damsel he came across, incontinently plunged her in the bathing-tub and soused her under. This filled the rest with dismay, and they forthwith took to their heels and ran, followed as speedily as her clinging garments would permit by the offended beauty who had been so unceremoniously treated. The occurrence was rather unfortunate, for the girls were all daughters of some of the principal Burmans in the town, and it is a very grave impropriety for a man to lay hands on a woman even in joke; how much more to duck her in a wash-tub and wet all her hair! That young official had no more compliments paid him at New Year's time, to his own loudly expressed regret.

The most ludicrous story I have heard on the subject of the water-feast may serve as a warning to Englishmen who arrive in Burma in April. The victim reached Rangoon on the second day of the water-feast, and having no Indian outfit got himself up in a tall hat, frock-coat, and the rest, to go and present a letter of introduction. After much trouble and irritation, caused by the meanderings of his ghari-wallah, not by any means alleviated by the heat—for the sun is usually at its hottest in April—he arrived at the desired house, and proceeded upstairs. On the verandah he found three or four Burmese girls, who forthwith asked permission to throw water on him. He naturally supposed they were asking whether he wanted to see the master of the house, and nodded violently. Whereupon they capsized their bowls of water over him, including the hat in the libation. The astonished man took it to be a custom of the country to cool down over-heated foreigners, but thought the inclusion of his hat an unnecessary detail. Just then the owner of the house appeared, having retired previously to get some money to buy himself off a ducking, and having been informed of the state of affairs, burst into a fit of such violent laughter at the griff's notion of the ceremony as roused in the latter a wrath so fiery that it almost dried him again.

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A special feature of the New Year's Feast was the formal washing of the king's head, called thi'gyan daw gyi. It is not to be supposed that his majesty washed his head only once a year, or that it is at any time an operation to be lightly undertaken, any more than it is by the humblest of his subjects. But at other times the ceremony was called hkaung-se mingala or thi'gyan daw hkaw, and was not attended with so great solemnity as characterised the function at the opening of a new year. Formerly the water for the purpose was annually brought up from Hkaung-se Gyun (Head-washing Island), a little rocky islet situated on the river opposite Maulmein. Hkaung-se Gyun is fabled to hang, with its little cluster of pagodas and monasteries, by an invisible cord from the heavens, and has therefore long enjoyed a special sanctity, not by any means reduced by the springs of clear bubbling water found on its limited surface. Therefore for long it supplied all the water for the royal head-washing. Latterly, however, it was abandoned, and with this there is a curious history connected. After the war of 1826, it was settled in a general way between the commissioners that the river Salween should form the boundary between Burma and the newly-acquired British province of Tenasserim. But later a question arose as to the ownership of the islands, and especially of the rich rice-growing Bilu-gyun, north and south of which the three rivers flow into the sea. After much fruitless palavering it was determined to leave the decision to chance. A couple of cocoa-nuts were tied together and taken some distance up the Salween and thrown into the water in the middle of the river. They went down bobbing gaily till they came to the place where the conflicting currents of the Gyaing and the Attaran come in, and there they twirled and twisted about in an aggravating way until at last an eddy caught them, and, carrying them past the old town of Martaban, decided for the Dayè outlet, through which they were swept away to sea. Thus the "Ogre's Isle" became British territory, and with it the little Hkaung-se Gyun. Nevertheless for many years water was still carried up to Mandalay for the thi'gyan law gyi, till at last Pegu was annexed to the British crown. Then it seemed undignified to carry the sacred water, not

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only from the stranger's land, but so many miles through alien waters, and so it was necessary to seek for another place. Where could a better be found than the mighty Irrawaddy itself? Accordingly from then on till there ceased to be a king of Burma, the necessary amount was drawn from the centre of the river by the Ye-kyi-wun, a minister specially appointed for that purpose.

As in so many other cases the amenities of the thi'gyan pwè have led to the extorting of money. In the good old days, and in the country districts still, it was the practice for benevolent people to keep open house, and give food and dainties to all passers-by, with tea and flavoured drinks, cheroots and betel for those that preferred them. To lighten the expense, contributions, called kèbo, were invited from friends and neighbours, and out of this has sprung the system of blackmail prevalent in Rangoon. A bevy of girls go into an Englishman's house and sprinkle him with lavender-water, or the moss-rose bouquet, so much in favour with Burmese belles. After a little badinage, they produce plain water, and threaten further operations unless something is given them. This they usually get, and if Englishmen complain of shameless extortion it is their own fault. The fair speculators are not such as any respectable girl would care to be seen with, and the prettinesses with scents are no more national than the scents are themselves. A provincial beauty would infinitely prefer a good honest ducking with vulgar water to the mawkish sentimentality of *eau de Cologne*. Some of the results of superior civilisation are very undesirable.

On the final day of the feast a gun is fired at noon to signalise the ascent of the thi'gya min to his happy realms again, and then all is over. The squirts are laid by for another year; clothes are hung up to dry, and nothing remains but to wait and see whether the pônnas are more successful than usual in their prognostications for the year.

The origin of the custom is no doubt the rain-making, described by Professor J. G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, but the Burmese explain it by a legend. The thi'gya min had a bet with a rival and the loser lost his head. This could not be allowed to be defiled by touching the ground, so it was caught by a daughter of Natdewas. Seven of them take it

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in turn to hold the head, and when the head passes from one goddess to another the New Year begins. The head is burning hot, and has to be cooled with pouring on of water. This is recalled by the splashing of one's neighbour with water at the New Year time.

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the pan; the Thônkwa bow felt the scratch of it on his palm as it disappeared through the tube

The scene that follows is beyond description. The victorious crew spring up to dance, but the relief is inadequate. They can only escape frenzy by plunging into the river. U Ôn tucks up his waistcloth and dances round in mad delight till his stiff old legs will bear him no longer. Pompous old lugyis caper and plunge and shout; younger men can only relieve their feelings by flinging themselves in the pools on the bank and rolling about wildly in the mud; girls, who at ordinary times would hardly dare to raise their eyes to look about them, dance and shout in ecstasy, and their married guardians join in the rout. Bands from a dozen villages round about strike up, but the professional dancers who came to perform in honour of the victors are fain to look on while their intended audience go through unpremeditated figures. It always seems marvellous how the people ever get gravity of demeanour again after a great boat-race.

The contest is technically not over yet. It is a hle-pyaung lu-pyaung, that is to say, the crews have now to change boats. The Thônkwa men take the Daungsatpyan, and the home crew man the Three Fair Flowers. But to all intents and purposes the victory has been won, and the home representatives are the conquerors. The two boats paddle up again, and the fishermen go right away and win with the most consummate ease. This sets money matters on a more comfortable footing, but the Myanaung people are not a whit disconcerted. They won the real race, that in which each crew rowed in its own boat, and they receive the arguments of the Thônkwa contingent with the most self-satisfied composure. The record of the champions has been broken, and the veteran Ko Kya-gyi has at last sat in a losing boat.

A general adjournment is made back to the town. The country people have all come in their bullock waggons, and these are drawn up in comfortable places under the trees. The victorious crew go in procession up and down the main street, preceded by bands and every one in the place who can dance. Feasting is general, and then all move off to

:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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527 the plays, of which there are three or four, while some unwearied spirits can only find relief for their exultant triumph in yein dances and irresponsible performances of their own. [273] Till dawn of day the revelry goes on, but there is nothing like drunkenness. It is exceedingly seldom that you see a drunken Burman out of Rangoon, where they claim to be Europeanised. For a couple of days the excitement lasts, and then the strangers wend their way homewards, and the township calms down to its usual quiet. But for years the great event will be talked of at the local feasts, and the Yein choruses of three or four generations will tell of the gallant struggle when the Daungsatpyan beat the Thônpanhla and broke the long supremacy of the Thônkwa rowers.

177.52 526 It is a great pity that these old contests are not kept up with the spirit that used to characterise them. In 1877 the then Chief Commissioner of British Burma, Mr. Rivers Thompson, believing that they led to unrestrained and dangerous gambling, issued an order forbidding all government officials to have anything to do with them, and advising that great races should be discouraged as much as possible. This policy was continued by Mr. Aitchison (late Sir Charles), and there seemed some danger that the art of making fine racing-boats would be lost, while all the fun and jollity of the old ye-pwè, kôn-pwè, land and water sports, were put an end to, without any decrease in the amount of 525 [101] gambling. The habit is as engrained with the Burman as with the Chinaman, and if there are no boat-races to bet on there are lots of other things, from pony matches to gônnyin-to, on which sporting votaries might stake their money. 526 177.52 There were still local matches between adjacent villages held, but they were but a sorry imitation of the old festivals, and have unfortunately led to the unpleasant speculations of the West being introduced. "Barneyings," in-and-out rowing, and all the unlovely customs of Western professionalism have sprung up as a consequence of the degradation of the old manly sport. Sir Charles Bernard, who was an ardent athlete himself, did a good deal towards reviving boat-racing. Sports have been held on the Great Royal Lake at Rangoon, it may be hoped only as a preliminary measure to the encouragement of longer contests on

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to worship. These are the eighth day of the waxing of the moon, full moon day, the eighth day of the waning moon, and a day during the transition to the new moon. The second and fourth of these are considered especially sacred. On these duty days all work in the village ceases and the public school is closed. The people go, usually in family groups, to the monastery. There they say prayers before the images of the Buddha and present gifts to the monks. For a good many, a large portion of the day, after the visit to the monastery, is passed in social visiting and in generally relaxing. For the more devout, usually the elderly people, the duty days are more serious; they abstain from food and drink after midday until the following sunrise, spending the day in silent meditation and prayer. 796 [887]

Ceremonies

Thingyan, the New Year. Throughout the year a number of the Burmese religious festivals are celebrated in Tadagale. We may begin with the New Year festival, which occurs in April, beginning on or about April 13th, according to the determination made by astrologers.

Traditionally, the New Year festival calls for visiting the pagodas and monasteries and washing the images of the Buddha, after which one calls upon his elders and sprinkles them gently with scented water from a silver bowl. The young men of the village go from house to house, dancing and singing to the accompaniment of an orchestra. At each house they sprinkle water on the elders and ask them to call out the young girls. The girls are likewise sprinkled with water by means of a flower carried in the bowls.

In Tadagale today, many of the traditional customs of the New Year are still observed. Preparatory to the holiday, houses are swept and compounds cleared of all refuse. Everything is made clean and orderly. The images of the Buddha are washed, elders are called upon, sprinkled with water, and wished well. But, as in many parts of the country, the New Year festival has tended to take on a rather secularized character in modern times. Water sprinkling has become water throwing; groups of people, especially youngsters, go into the towns in carts or trucks, armed with buckets of water which they throw at passers-by. The name 'Water Festival' which has been given to the New Year celebration is singularly appropriate, since water-throwing and associated hilarity has overshadowed the sacred significance of the occasion. Some villagers go into Rangoon for the celebration, where everyone engages in dousing everyone he encounters (monks excepted), utilizing every means from buckets to large hoses attached to city water hydrants. These activities are in contrast with the traditionally serious, sacred character of the New Year as conceived by older villagers. The schoolmaster of the community, a middle-aged man with many years of religious training, spoke of the New Year: 796 178 527 ●

> Thingyan is the New Year festival, but the villagers do not know the significance of the festival. They know only that it is a feast day and a holiday and a day for having fun. In reality there should be no frivolity on New Year's day; it is a day on which one should fast and pray, for one is now one year older and therefore nearer death. One should meditate on the futility of frivolity as compared with the blessedness of deeds of merit.

Wase, the Buddhist Lent. In July, on the full moon day of the month of Wase, there begins a sacred period of some three months, corresponding closely 796 785

572 The friendships he[1] has made with other workers do not seem to be
369 very deep or very lasting. In Pathwe the workers were all friends, and even included his relatives as well. There are not many strangers in Pathwe and even people not connected by blood ties were treated like relatives.

369 "In Rangoon the seller takes a profit on everything we have
426 to buy for food; items like rice, vegetables and fruits. Of course
444 he cannot be blamed, because he has a living to earn too. He gives wage-earners goods on credit, but charges an interest on those goods. In Pathwe U Myaing could get most of the necessary food without having to pay any interest or middleman's profits since he bought straight from the producer. In Rangoon all people who earn monthly wages are the same. They have to take goods on credit. Those who do not earn regular salaries are allowed credit, but they have to undertake to settle accounts by a fixed date.

525 During the TAGU month festival, U Myaing gambled for money.
●527 He has gambled to stakes as high as three hundred rupees, but never up to one or two thousand. In Pathwe they had this on the PAYA-GYI-DAUNG side, and U Myaing joined in whenever he came across in other villages a group who were playing while on business. When he was young he gambled away Rs. 700/- while on a trip to KYANGIN. They were all of them on the same boat and he lost that amount at DANUBYU. But by the time they reached KANDOKN he had recovered his money. The games they played were poker and HO-HEK.

525 In their village they had people who held fights between game
541 cocks. U Myaing never bred any of these fowls but he has placed bets on them several times, small bets to the value of four or five rupees. There is no special announcement made but word gets around that there is to be a match at such and such a place on such and such a day, and at the appointed time the villagers who are interested all congregate at that spot.

There are bookmakers among the assembled villagers who are willing to take any bets on either side. Cock fighting is carried on during the months of PYATHO and TABODWE. And even then they have it during only four or five days in the month. U Myaing does not go to every meeting. In the rains the ground is wet for game cock-fighting

1. [i.e., U Myaing -- ANALYST]

These are his "eggs" and it is his duty to guard them while the others cluster around trying to get them away from him without being caught in the attempt. If they are successful in getting all the eggs away they then go and hide them. The "turtle" then has to go and look for eggs while the rest follow her giving encouragement clapping hands and shouting the chant " LEIT U PY UK LO LEIT MA SHAR THU KHIN BYAR NGO ME NGO MEY (Because her eggs are lost the poor female turtle is tearfully looking for them). If the child succeeds in catching any one in an attempt to get an egg away that person becomes the turtle. 527 858

In Pathwe they celebrated the water festival, but they did it in moderation and were satisfied if a person got slightly wet. MEN-LEY-HSAUNG was given in the village. 527

U Myaing did not save any money in Pathwe. Sometimes he made a great deal of money and sometimes he made nothing at all. Sometimes if he had a lot of money he would loan it out to some one else to be returned in three or four months time if possible. Sometimes these loans continued unsettled for about a year. Only in Rangoon do you have to pay interest. In Pathwe if you did not borrow from chettiars you did not need to pay any interest. U Myaing did not go to the chettiars. He borrowed only from his relatives. There were people who went to raise money from the chettiar money lenders and some of them lost house, cultivation fields etc. because they could not pay the high rate of interest and had the mortgages on their property foreclosed. 454 426 [563]

Analysis of Social and Ceremonial Activities

The refugee camp may be regarded as a new village composed of families who came from villages in the delta similar to Pathwe but placed in an urban setting. The other refugees have the same understandings as to socio-ceremonial activities as U Myaing and the basic 621 722 [369]

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2. Folk Feasts and Spirit Dances

According to legend, the Sanskrit drama was created in the Silver Age to cheer up the people, who were no longer happy as they were in the Golden Age; the Japanese drama was first used by the gods to beguile the sun-goddess to reappear; and the Chinese drama came into being as the result of the Emperor Yuen Tsaung ordering, in the eighth century after Christ, a group of children to be trained to sing the various deeds of the great national heroes before his consort, in appreciation of her love for him.[1] The Burmese, however, have no such legends, and the origins of their drama were in the religious *Nibbathkhin*. But before considering those Burmese miracle plays, perhaps it will not be out of place to give an account of the various folk feasts and spirit dances, which have in them elements essentially dramatic, and which gave some idea of the dramatic to the people and paved a way for the coming of the religious pageants and plays.

Folk feasts can be divided into two classes, those directly connected with Buddhism and those which are not. The Buddhist feasts occur on fixed dates and are celebrated all over the country. Of those, two are especially interesting, the feast of the Full Moon of the month of Tazaungmôn (which occurs in November) and the feast of the New Year (in April). Though the Full Moon of Tazaungmôn is an important Buddhist festival now, it is extremely probable that it was an important feast-day even before the introduction of Buddhism.[2] Special celebrations connected with the date have two distinct elements, the element of mimicry and the element of foolery. On that day, in the villages men dress themselves as animals, wearing appropriate masks, and dance through the village. The animal most commonly imitated is a sort of unicorn known to myth only. The desire to mimic animals probably came before the desire to mimic spirits, and I think the mimicry of animals, such as that we see in these celebrations, was the earliest attempt at the dramatic by the Burmese. Probably the mimicry of animals by men resulted in the presentation of animal puppet shows. In a Burmese puppet show, before the play begins, different animals come out one by

[1] A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*; F. A. Lombard, *Japanese Drama*; A. E. Zucker, *Chinese Theatre*.

[2] Some Buddhist festivals in Burma probably are of pre-Buddhist origins (cf. the English Christmas which has many elements derived from pre-Christian times). At least the special celebrations of Tazaungmôn described here are almost certainly pre-Buddhist.

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527 one, and each gives a special dance of its own.[1] At night, as part of the
796 celebrations, there is a feast of fools. Young men and boys roam the
530* village, throwing *zibyu* fruits at houses and stealing things, which will
174 be found in the centre of the village the next morning: the objects of the good-natured theft are mostly articles that would provoke laughter—such as a lady's under-skirt; or those which would cause temporary inconvenience in the morning—such as cooking utensils, steps from stairs, or a piece from the roof. The Feast of the New Year is one of mirth and foolery. It is known as the Water Festival because on that occasion, every Burman takes a delight in throwing water at his neighbour and getting soaked himself as the result of the other's counter-attack. The men derive great enjoyment from drenching the women, who in their turn are not slow to have their revenge. Young men group themselves and dance joyously along the streets, at times being chased by bands of elderly maiden ladies who lie in wait to catch the ringleaders. When caught, the youths are lightly bound with silken cords and their faces are blackened with soot. Then they are made to perform a monkey dance before being granted their release. The spirit of fun apparent in these Burmese feasts of foolery is akin to that which moved the young clerks of the *Parlement* of Paris and the members of the Inns of Court in London to stage their Feasts of Fools in medieval times.[2]

527 As the villagers lead a communal life and every joy and sorrow of
a villager is shared by all others, a joyful event is celebrated by a
[561] public feast. Marriage, birth, the admission of a son to his novitiate (for every Burmese boy enters priesthood for at least a week), and the piercing of the ear of a daughter are occasions for mirth and jollity. At these feasts they sing and dance and mimic, groups of villagers vie with each other for new methods of giving entertainment, and there
[241] is keen rivalry between youths and maidens. The most mirthful feast of all is the Harvest Feast in February, when the paddy has been reaped, and the village is ready to enjoy a well-earned rest of four after a working period of eight months.

527 These folk feasts are of great antiquity, though, because of the
796 essentially unchanging life in the villages, they continue to exist even at the present day. The Tazaungmôn and other Buddhist feasts

[1] The puppet show is described in a later chapter.

[2] Cf. E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, chap. xiii, 'The Feast of Fools'; also E. Welsford, *The Court Masque*, p. 2.

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have been celebrated year after year, at least since the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056, and at least since March, 638, when an early king of Pagan, Popa Sawrahan (613–40), drew up the present Burmese era, the dawn of every Burmese new year has been the occasion for mirthful water-throwing.[1]

Buddhism had been introduced into the country through commercial relations with India long before the foundation of the kingdom of Pagan, but from the beginning it was only at second-hand and therefore feeble. The real religion of the Burmese before the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056 was animistic, and they worshipped various spirits, known as *nats*. There were mediums, mostly women, who danced to please the spirits, and as the spirits were supposed to enter into the bodies of the mediums, sometimes it was believed that the spirits, and not the mediums, were actually dancing. Sometimes the medium herself actually believed that a spirit had taken control of her body, but usually she only pretended that a spirit had entered her, and gave an exhibition of acting. As the medium of each particular *nat* dressed herself in appropriate clothes, the spirit dances were essentially dramatic.[2] When Buddhism, in one of its purest forms, was introduced under Anawrahta, the great king realized the impossibility of attracting people suddenly to the new faith; so he compromised by recognizing the *nats* as Buddhist spirits and giving them shrines in his Shwezigôn Pagoda as its guardian spirits. When asked the reason, Anawrahta replied: 'Men will not come suddenly to the new faith. Let them come for their old gods, and they will gradually be won over.'[3]

So the worship of the *nats* lived on, and with the advance of

[1] Shway-Yoe (Sir George Scott) in *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, and Fielding Hall in *The Soul of a People* give detailed accounts of the feasts and life in the villages. However, as far as I have been able to find out, the Tazaungmôn celebrations have never been described in any English work.

[2] These dances are still performed on spirit-feast days at Taungbyôn (near Mandalay), a small town given up to spirit worship since the days of Pagan's greatness and perhaps even before.

The belief in, as distinct from the worship of, spirits is not alien to Buddhism.

The chief works on the subject are: Sir R. C. Temple, *The Thirty-Seven Nats*; Grant Brown, 'The Taungbyon Festival' in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1915; the same author's 'The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese' in *Folk-Lore*, 1921; and G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*.

[3] G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 33.

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410. THE CHARMER APPROACHING THE SNAKE.

state; the fascination of the show is the danger. But as soon as the snake is unmolested it glides away harmlessly; no one feels any apprehension from its proximity, the moment the showman ceases to tease the snake. A cobra is easy to find, but it may take months to discover a hamadryad. The creature is tracked by the trail it leaves in the sand of a dry stream or the dust of a road to the place where it is watching its eggs. At this time, if ever, the snake is aggressive. But like the rest of the cobra family, its movements are comparatively slow; the charmer's hand is quicker, the snake is captured and consigned to the basket before it can strike. After that it is handled with impunity. There is no sort of training; the charmers say that the snake may be shown the same day that it is caught. When the snake is set at large, it appears to be bluffed by the performer, and made to execute feints of attack corresponding to the feints of the charmer, who keeps time to music, and so creates the impression that the snake is swaying—"dancing"—to the sound. The snakes are difficult to feed and keep in condition. They are let go after a month or two, in the hope of catching them again; the charmer vows to release the snake after a definite term, and has a superstition that if he keeps faith the snake will not hurt him.

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The Burmese festivals have been described as being confined to a single one, which begins in April and goes on to the following March. But that is an exaggeration. There are two regular carnivals of a week or ten days each, and several others of a couple of days' duration, besides occasional festivities to celebrate the completion of *zedi* and temples,—and last, but not least, the

411. THE HAMADRYAD CAPTURED.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
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412. SNAKE-CHARMER'S PERFORMANCE.

cremation of the *yahán*. Burmese New-Year—moon-change at *Tagú*—falls in April, as the sun enters the sign of Aries. The calendar has been regulated on the Brahman model with intercalary days and months (Appendix E). New-Year marks the greatest crisis in the seasons; the heat has reached its climax, to drop abruptly at the break of the south-west monsoon. Now is the time of drought; many of the wells are empty, and water has to be fetched from a distance. There is no greater luxury than abundance of water at this season; water is the most seasonable offering, and great supplies are stored in the jars at the *kyaungs*. In a symbolic spirit, water is poured over the images of the Buddha. But the great feature of the New-Year festival is the burlesque of these libations. In the true spirit of the carnival, the women douse the men, and the men douse the women, all regardless of their festal attire. The young women in particular wait in ambush for the gallants, perhaps to be caught in a second ambush by some urchin. The liberty of water-throwing lasts for the days of *akyó*, *akyá*, *akyát*, and *atét*, the stages of the journey which a *thadyá* makes from heaven to earth to see the works of men if they be good. The legend is probably derived from the Hindu myth of the rain-god Indra, to whom water is offered at the season of his expected descent. A religious feature of the festival is the ransom of cattle. An animal kept for slaughter by the Indian Musulman butcher is borrowed and gaily decked out, with its horns gilded. It is led round the village or quarter of the town, followed by a festive throng, and contributions are gathered until the price of the animal is made up, when it is set free at the *kyaung* to be an evidence of goodwill to all things living.

413. NEW-YEAR PETE (PAYA-YE-CHO).